



EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT NEWS
The Monthly Electronic Newsletter of
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Photo Courtesy of The Colebrook Chronicle

A N.H. DOT snowplow struggles to keep N.H. 145 open on the Colebrook-Stewartstown town line during the Valentine's Day Blizzard.

BLIZZARD STRIKES NORTHEAST ON VALENTINE'S DAY – The winter that almost never happened finally arrived on Valentine's Day, bringing up to two feet of blowing and drifting snow from the Massachusetts border to the North Country. But despite blizzard and near-blizzard conditions statewide, there were no serious problems. There was plenty of advance warning, so when the storm moved into the state in the early morning hours of February 14th, nearly 700 schools, government offices and businesses had cancelled activities for the day. Even the N.H. House and Senate postponed a busy day of committee hearings at the State House.

The state Emergency Operations Center was open from 4 a.m. on February 14th until 4 p.m. the following day to monitor the storm and maintain contact with partner agencies. Utilities reported scattered power outages, but no local EOCs or shelters were opened.

PANDEMIC FLU TABLETOPS DEAL WITH SCHOOL CLOSINGS – State and local officials conducted two tabletop exercises earlier this month dealing with issues related to the closing of schools during an impending influenza pandemic. Participating were N.H. Homeland Security and Emergency Management, State Police, state health and education officials and representatives of the Manchester, Nashua and surrounding school districts. The exercises were aimed at obtaining information on the issues to provide feedback to help the Centers for Disease Control develop policy for responding to a flu pandemic.

The sessions raised a number of issues, including the importance of schools to their communities. Early school closings would help prevent the spread of the disease, but would also cause economic hardship and disruption to families. A lengthy school closing would have cascading effects throughout a community, including unemployment and a weakening economy. Participants agreed that a pandemic flu outbreak could cause problems at least on the scale of the Spanish Flu outbreak of 1918 and additional planning is needed at all levels.

STATE/COAST GUARD SIGN MUTUAL AID PACT – Governor Lynch has signed a Memorandum of Agreement with the U.S. Coast Guard that will enhance security in Portsmouth Harbor and along the coast. The agreement allows N.H. Marine Patrol officers to enforce violations of a federal security zone. Previously, if state officers found a violation in a federal zone they had to wait for the arrival of the Coast Guard. Now the N.H. Marine Patrol will have the authority to stop and board vessels and take enforcement action in federal security zones. Governor Lynch signed the MOA with Rear Admiral Tim Sullivan, Commander of the First Coast Guard District.

The MOA builds on an already strong relationship between the N.H. Marine Patrol and the Coast Guard. The two agencies work together to secure the transit of LPG tankers in Portsmouth Harbor and on joint security patrols of critical maritime infrastructure in Portsmouth and Seabrook.

GUARD CIVIL SUPPORT TEAM EARNS FEDERAL CERTIFICATION – The N.H. National Guard's 12th Civil Support Team has been certified by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, capping nearly two years of intensive training, qualification schools and evaluations. The official notification, delivered through a February 1st letter from the Chairman of the Committee on Armed Services, said that the group of 22 N.H. National Guard soldiers and airmen "possess the requisite skills, training and equipment to be proficient in all mission requirements." It means that the 12th CST is available to support first responders when a chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear or high yield explosive (CBRNE) event occurs or is suspected anywhere in the state or elsewhere. Equipped with state-of-the-art equipment, the team can also provide valuable assistance during other state and regional homeland missions the N.H. Guard may support.

The team has four primary capabilities: identifying a CBRNE agent or substance, assessing the current and projected consequences, advising on response measures and assisting with appropriate requests for state and federal support.

In other news from the National Guard, a team of Army National Guardsmen is at Fort Riley, Kan., for several months of training before being deployed to Afghanistan. The guardsmen, representing different military specialties, will support a mentorship program with the Afghan National Army. The N.H. Embedded Training Team will train the Afghan National Army on reconnaissance, engineering and fire-planning operations. The training and planning will focus on battalion-level command and control, combat support during offensive and defensive operations, convoy operations and convoy security operations.

CITIZEN CORPS SCHEDULES TRAINING FOR CERTS – Over the last several months, applications to organize local Citizen Corps Councils have increased significantly. That growth in interest has led to an increased need to train community volunteers in its most popular "Charter" program, CERT - Community Emergency Response Teams. As a result, Volunteer N.H./Citizen Corps will offer a CERT "Train the Trainer" course in an effort to keep up with the demand. The two-day program is scheduled for March 19-20 at the Richard M. Flynn Fire Academy on Sheep Davis Road in Concord. Because of the length of the course, a working lunch will be provided. Registration for the training is at www.volunteernh.org. Anyone taking the training must be willing to instruct at least one CERT course for N.H. Citizen Corps within two years.

CERT training educates people about disaster preparedness and trains them in basic disaster response skills, such as fire safety, light search and rescue and disaster medical operations. Using their training, CERT members can assist others in their neighborhood or workplace following an event and can take a more active role in preparing their community. Anyone with questions may e-mail nhccinfo@volunteernh.org.

CHESTERFIELD EMD HONORED FOR VOLUNTEER SERVICE – Chesterfield Emergency Management Director Ruth Van Houten was one of four municipal volunteers honored at the New Hampshire Local Government Center's annual conference in Manchester last November 16th. The Volunteer of the Year award is for outstanding commitment and dedication to local communities and serving as a model for volunteerism. Belated congratulations to Ruth!